Good morning, Tansi Kahkiyaw

I want to say again, as I did yesterday, my thanks to each of you for taking the time this weekend to attend this AGM. Your attendance and participation in this democratic process is important.

As of tomorrow, it will be twelve months since your Board of Directors was sworn into office. With some 17 meetings of the Board, both face to face and by teleconference – which is about average – plus other meetings, including our own Métis Nation British Columbia Governing Assembly plus 3 Special Sittings and 1 regular Sitting of the Métis Nation General Assembly, it has been a busy year for the Board. It has also been an historic year for the Métis Nation.

- During these past 12 months, we have signed two Accords. One with the Province of British Columbia and the other, along with our other four Governing Members with the Government of Canada.
- These Accords are political documents or agreements between public government and our Métis Nation. They are significant because they are commitments by all parties to the Accords to move certain matters forward – to make progress in specific and general areas on behalf of Métis people.
• Let me address the Canada – Métis Nation Accord first. This Accord was signed by 7 parties on April 13th of this year in Ottawa. The Prime Minister signed on behalf of Canada, President Chartier signed on behalf of the Métis National Council, and the Presidents of each of the five Governing Members of the Métis National Council signed on behalf of their respective jurisdictions. I was deeply honoured to have signed the document on behalf of MNBC and the Métis people in British Columbia.

• History was made that day in Ottawa. For the very first time in the 150 years of this country, a federal government recognized the Métis Nation, as a distinct Aboriginal people, and committed to reconciliation, and a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship through two primary ways – a permanent bilateral mechanism between Canada, the Métis National Council and the Governing Members at the national level, and through regional or provincial discussions and/or negotiations in order to and I quote straight from the Accord “renew the relationship through cooperation, to further Métis self-government, while respecting Métis rights and ending the status quo” end quote.
• This is a substantive agreement signed by the Prime Minister of Canada and witnessed by the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

• It is the federal Crown’s commitment signed by the holder of the highest office in this country to making a difference in the lives of Métis people in this country, including here in British Columbia.

• This agreement did not just happen. The efforts started prior to the last federal election with collective work done by our senior officials of the Governing Members and MNC working together on providing input into the federal Liberal Party’s campaign platform, and then in the months following the October 2015, election meetings and teleconferences were held to put the pieces together.

• The Accord lays out 16 priority areas that very much are reflective of our priorities here in British Columbia. They are as follows:

1. Métis Nation Human Resources & Social Development including:
   a. Employment & Training
   b. Youth
   c. Early Learning and Child Care
   d. Poverty Reduction
   e. Homelessness
   f. Social Innovation
   g. Education
2. Fiscal Relations  
3. Health & Wellness  
4. Housing  

- These first four including the specific subject areas are the priorities for Year One. The other 12 priority areas are the following:  

5. Métis Section 35 Rights, Recognition and Reconciliation  
6. Economic Development  
7. Language and Culture  
8. Métis Women  
9. Environment  
10. International  
11. Residential Schools and Day Schools  
12. Métis Veterans  
13. Test Case funding  
14. Justice and Policing  
15. Child and Family Services; and  
16. Employment Equity  

- These are the priority areas identified so far, and more can be added. This is why this is such a significant agreement. By moving on these priority areas, we will make a difference for Métis people in this country, and most importantly for us here, Métis people here in British Columbia.
As the National Métis Minister of Health, moving the Health and Wellness file forward is a very high priority for me, and I have met with the former Minister of Health Jane Philpott several times and the new Minister of Health Ginette Petitpas Taylor just this past week on those priorities.

So two days ago, the CEO and I flew to Ottawa to a Board of Governors meeting followed by the first Bilateral meeting with key members of the federal Cabinet to discuss progress on the Accord.

In the meeting we asked for the federal government to commit to $112.5 million annually to support a Métis Nation Housing Strategy over a 10-year period, $60 million annually for Métis Early Learning and Child Care, $125 million annually for the renewal and Enhancement of ASETS and a $50 million contribution for Métis Nation Scholarships and Bursaries. It was very important for us to submit this ask now as the Federal Minister of Finance is already beginning work on next year’s budget. It is a sizeable ask but we have reminded the federal government that their first two budgets provided significant funding boosts to First Nations and little to Métis.

The next budget must recognize and more importantly address the needs of the Métis people in this country.
Let me address a question that some of you may have – how much will MNBC receive for Métis people here in British Columbia? At this point, we don’t know because we don’t know how much of the total ask of the $347.5 million we will get in 2018/19 and in each of the subsequent years. Once that is known, we don’t know whether the federal government will enter into negotiations with each Governing Member on how much of the total budget commitment each Governing Member is to receive, or whether they will leave that to the Board of Governors to determine. If it is the latter, there is a funding formula that has been in place for years that might apply.

The formula calls for an allocation of 25% to each of Métis Nation Alberta, Métis Nation Saskatchewan and Manitoba Metis Federation, and 12.5% to each of Métis Nation Ontario and MNBC. That formula did not just arrive one year ago when I became President. That is a formula that has been around for years, but now with the possibility of this increased funding, it takes on a whole new significance.

Last year at a special sitting of the Métis Nation General Assembly, the formula was reconfirmed by the delegates, over the opposition of ourselves and MNO. The problem is that Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba each have 15 delegates, while MNO and ourselves have 5 each. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, not surprisingly voted to retain the formula. With that delegate count, it is highly unlikely that they will vote to change the formula.
• In my view it is the make-up of the number of delegates of the General Assembly that needs to be changed to change the funding formula. It is a problem that did not just happen one year ago when I became President. It has been a problem for years, but we need to fix this problem and I am determined to do so.

• Without going into all the details, I will say that my own view is that the answer lies within a rep by Métis population based formula, but a possible remedy is one that our own Board of Directors will need to have a full discussion on first.

• Having laid out the situation for you, let me reiterate how important the Accord with Canada is for Métis people, and notwithstanding the funding allocation challenges that I have described, I am optimistic that the federal government will commit funds in the next budget to the Métis Nation.
Let me now turn to the Accord signed here in British Columbia with the last Provincial Government. On Louis Riel Day last year – November 16th we signed the Métis Nation Relationship Accord II with the government. This was a renewal and an expansion of the first one signed in 2006. This one has 9 subject or priority areas including:

1. Children and Families
2. Economic opportunities (including procurement)
3. Education and Training
4. Health
5. Housing
6. Information sharing
7. Justice
8. Métis Identification and Data collection
9. Wildlife Stewardship

I am very pleased to report that following the change in provincial governments, the new Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation has assured me that they are committed to the MNRA II and will continue our joint work plan. In this first year of the renewed Accord, economic opportunity initiatives, health and wildlife stewardship are the priorities.
Finally, I want to speak to the funding capacity for the Communities. The strength of our nation flows from the strength of our communities. In my travels to the Communities around the province in past years, I heard of the needs and challenges of the Communities in being able to cover the cost of office space or meeting space, or the costs of part time help or to be able to provide the most basic of services to our Citizens and Community members.

We were very pleased this past February to be able to provide Communities with a financial contribution of $4000 each to help you meet your needs to Métis people. That was a first, and I can assure you it won’t be the last. It is our hope that we can make another contribution to Communities this fiscal year. We are not yet in a position to say it’s a go for this year, but we expect to know within the next few weeks. We know you need it and we are pushing hard to have that happen.

In closing, let me say that we have made tremendous progress in this past year, but we have much work to do. Some days some issues can be very challenging. On some of those days I think of Canada’s hero and our own Métis hero Terry Fox as he would struggle and finally get to the top of one hill and then see another hill in front of him. He faced every challenge and every hill because he knew he was raising awareness and raising dollars to fight cancer. He accomplished so much then and his legacy of raising funds has continued even today.
Our goal is to make a difference for Métis people and families wherever they live in British Columbia, and like Terry Fox we will meet every challenge and we will never give up.

Marsee, Thank you